

# Organisational Professionalism

## ► **Guidelines**



## ▶ 1. Foreword

ICT is a vital component of life and industry. We rely on ICT to run our cars, communicate via phone or mail, access news and information, shop, manage our health and education, run our businesses, design new products and services, and much else.

The UK's ICT industries make a substantial contribution to the prosperity of the nation, but global competition is fierce and growing. Continuous performance improvement is essential for the future success of the UK.

Business change projects enabled by ICT are often large and complex, and require the effective co-operation of many organisations for success. Intellect has produced these guidelines to encourage more effective and efficient co-operation.

Intellect has a programme of activities to improve the practice, reputation and image of the ICT industry and support UK plc's ongoing leadership in the global ICT market. These guidelines complement other Intellect publications produced as part of that programme, including the Intellect Code of Conduct, IT Supplier Code of Best Practice and Concept Viability.

Intellect's organisational professionalism guidelines are part of the ProfIT programme driven by a strategic alliance of Intellect, the British Computer Society (BCS), e-skills UK and the National Computing Centre (NCC) to establish IT as a valued profession. Intellect will actively promote these guidelines as part of its contribution to the ProfIT programme.



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## ► 2. Introduction

### What is organisational professionalism?

Professionalism is not an end in itself; it delivers key outcomes, including improved services and better value for money. Professional organisations create confidence and trust in their customers, suppliers, staff and other stakeholders, which results in reduced costs, increased profits and an enhanced reputation for the industry as a whole. Organisational professionalism is essential to keep the UK industry globally competitive and profitable, ensuring it commands respect from other professionals and has a universally high reputation among stakeholders.

It is necessary but not sufficient for organisations to employ individual professionals. Professional organisations enable and enforce individual professionalism to ensure success; supporting, guiding and motivating the work of the people employed. They nurture processes that create and apply learning and innovation rooted in the work and experience of their professional staff.

Major transformation programmes are typically supported by complex supply chains. Organisational professionalism must pervade the whole supply chain for the desired outcomes of the work to be achieved. Organisations are often concurrently both suppliers and customers; hence these guidelines cover both sides of the customer/supplier relationship.

Each organisation acts as a bridge in a supply chain between its suppliers and its customers. The effectiveness of the bridge depends on the seven piers of organisational professionalism. If any of the piers are weak, the whole supply chain bridge is damaged. Professional organisations are strong in all piers.

### Why has Intellect produced these guidelines?

The aim of this document is to define organisational professionalism and give guidelines for organisations to implement it. Intellect encourages all organisations to embed these guidelines in their business and in their contracts with other organisations. A mutual commitment to observe the guidelines should be made explicit between customer and supply organisations. The responsibility for managing unprofessional behaviour should also be embedded into the relationship and commitment.

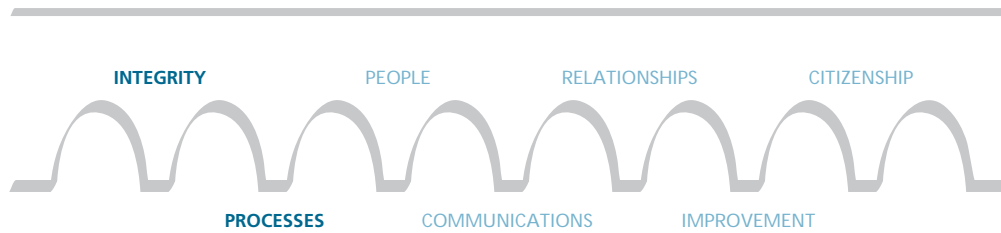
### How should these guidelines be used?

The guidelines are designed to form the basis of engagement between organisations in the supply chain. Strong professionalism engenders mutual trust and recognises the importance of close professional working relationships. Detailed and complex contracts are no substitute for, or alternative to, mutual trust and positive relationships. Contracts that are negotiated without these characteristics have weak foundations.

The management of organisations must give a clear lead in professionalism and ensure that it permeates the entire organisation.



## ▶ 3. The Seven Piers of Organisational Professionalism



### 1. Integrity

Confidence and trust are key factors in any procurement decision. Customers and suppliers need to be certain that the organisations with which they do business are trustworthy and honest. Companies will enforce ethical behaviour and:

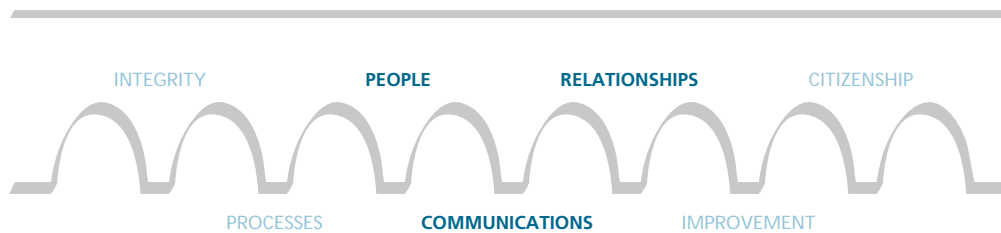
- a) deliver a service aimed at achieving outcomes relevant to the customer and mutually agreed by the customer and supplier
- b) only bid where the organisation has a clear plan to have the capability and capacity to deliver
- c) be clear on what the organisation does and what it does not do, and what it wants and does not want; honestly represent requirements, products, skills, services, and their availability
- d) have honest and clear branding and communications, and always behave in accordance with that branding
- e) show respect to customers, competitors, suppliers, other companies, employees and the public. Be honest about other organisations or their products and services, but never disparage them
- f) honour commitments from any part of the organisation as a commitment from the whole organisation
- g) keep safe confidential information entrusted to the organisation
- h) ensure that no person is encouraged to act in breach of any existing or previous agreement with another organisation

### 2. Processes

Professional organisations are consistent and accurate in their behaviour and outputs. They reproduce good performance, track the progress of current work and quickly analyse and communicate problems and their solutions. They ensure that employees and contractors are aware of and comply with all appropriate processes and guidelines.

They operate appropriate, well documented quality systems that:

- a) comply with relevant national and international standards and appropriate published codes of conduct, such as the Intellect Code of Conduct
- b) develop, apply and maintain relevant codes of practice and conduct specific to the organisation's business
- c) comply with relevant regulations and legislation, including those relating to security, health and safety, data protection and freedom of information, plus those that are sector specific, such as in banking and finance
- d) operate codes of practice and conduct that relate to personal professional behaviour, including supporting individuals that refuse to undertake irresponsible or unethical actions, even if demanded by a customer or manager
- e) establish processes for capacity forecasting to match planned and tendered workloads to the capability to deliver and manage work - identifying the skills, competencies and experience the organisation needs for the future
- f) operate robust processes for how the organisation makes commitments, especially to customers
- g) use effective risk management and share identified risks and risk management plans with suppliers and customers
- h) operate processes that focus on successful delivery
- i) use processes with relevant measures for continuous improvement – learning from successes and failures, both externally and internally
- j) have well documented systems that address business continuity and risk
- k) escalate issues when problems occur
- l) provide traceability and accountability for decisions and actions



### 3. People

The capabilities and behaviour of the people in an organisation are at the heart of professionalism. Organisations can only function effectively with the loyalty, dedication and commitment of competent staff, and must provide an environment in which people can work professionally.

#### Professional development

- a) Demand and support individual professionalism and embed it into the HR policy of the organisation, along with a performance management system which rewards professional and disciplines unprofessional behaviour.
- b) Develop and value the knowledge and experience of staff. Promote Continual Professional Development (CPD) providing ongoing training/professional development for all staff - targeted to the business but supporting individual self-motivation, growth and development.
- c) Employ appropriate methods such as the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA), for skills management and development.
- d) Encourage staff to achieve external skills accreditations, including the achievement of suitable qualifications.
- e) Provide career development opportunities that are aligned to the goals of the organisation and the personal interests and motivation of the people. Assign people to work that they are qualified and available to undertake and which develops a fulfilling career for them.
- f) Operate good staff assessment and development processes that are compliant with the standards of relevant professional institutions.
- g) Encourage staff to join professional groups of common interest.

#### Employee engagement

- h) Provide a work-life balance: an environment that enables people to work while fulfilling their roles as parents, carers and members of society.
- i) Actively embrace the principles of diversity.
- j) Encourage employees to openly discuss work related ideas and concerns with their leaders. Where employees are not satisfied with a response they should have access to alternative mechanisms for taking unresolved issues to someone outside their direct management structure.

### 4. Communications

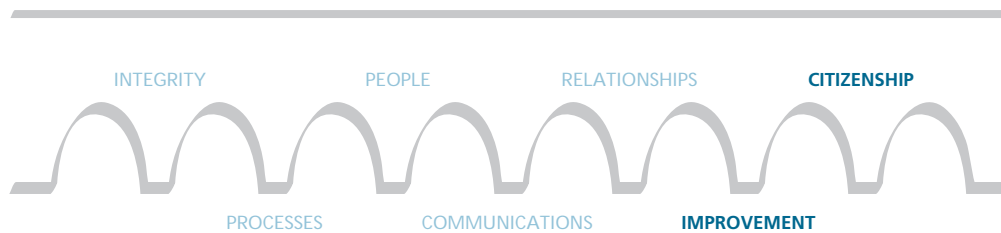
Trust relies on clear, effective and ongoing communication. Common understanding is reached only through good communication. Customers and suppliers need a full and robust understanding of a project or service's requirements, including the broader business context. Customers must be clear **what** they want, **when**, **where**, and **how**. Suppliers must be clear **what** they will supply, **when** they will deliver it and **how** they will achieve the objectives. Communication is often more about listening and receiving than telling.

- a) Establish and maintain clear two-way relevant communication internally, with customers, suppliers, other stakeholders and the public.
- b) Provide communications that are:
  - in simple, jargon-free language appropriate to the target audience
  - relevant
  - timely
  - true
  - transmitted via reliable, accessible and appropriate channels
  - accorded appropriate levels of security and confidentiality.

### 5. Relationships

The way in which organisations establish and manage their relationships with suppliers, customers and other stakeholders is a critical component of organisational professionalism. Well-established relationships deliver results and build trust, whereas misunderstandings break trust and confidence. Trust is very difficult to recover once it has been lost.

- a) Understand the appropriate relationship between organisations, communicate it clearly, enshrine it in relevant governance models and maintain it.
- b) Recognise that the relationship needed between two organisations can vary over time and act accordingly.
- c) Establish and support relationships with formality. A professional organisation will train its staff in developing and maintaining relationships.
- d) Constructively challenge other organisations that are suppliers, partners or customers when improvements can be made to a delivery, system or programme.
- e) Build relationships with other professional organisations that are based on mutual trust and close communication. Such relationships provide the soundest basis on which to draft and negotiate lasting contractual commitments.



## 6. Improvement

The commercial and technical environment in which organisations operate is continually changing. Professional organisations adapt and thrive based on deliberate analysis and learning from experiences, both good and bad.

- a) Continually improve products and services through learning and continuous innovation
- b) Share learning within your organisation, with customers, suppliers and partners up and down the supply chain, maintaining a consistent approach to any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues that arise
- c) Share learning through professional institutions and trade associations
- d) Learn:
  - by listening
  - through successes and mistakes
  - from suppliers, customers and partners’ successes and mistakes
  - from other market sectors and continually improve your organisation and its performance

## 7. Citizenship

Organisations are not islands; they are integral parts of wider society, including the communities and industries in which they operate, provide employment, pay taxes, pollute, create wealth and impact the lives of people. They:

- a) enrich the environment and help the people they touch, including employees, their families, local communities and society at large
- b) actively participate in relevant trade and commerce associations to contribute to the overall improvement of the industry and to its good reputation nationally and internationally
- c) publish and deliver Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes; recognise and promote the effective use of ICT as an instrument for social and economic good
- d) actively avoid doing harm to the environment and take positive action to improve it; enforce clear policies on recycling and energy efficiency, as well as the refurbishment of equipment, disposal of waste and control of pollution
- e) commit to high standards of behaviour in compliance with the law and with publicly recognised codes of conduct and codes of practice

For further information about these guidelines or Intellect’s work email [professionalism@intellectuk.org](mailto:professionalism@intellectuk.org)

### References

- British Computer Society: [www.bcs.org](http://www.bcs.org)
- BSI: [www.bsi-global.com](http://www.bsi-global.com)
- e-skills UK: [www.e-skills.com](http://www.e-skills.com)
- Intellect Concept Viability: [www.intellectuk.org/conceptviability](http://www.intellectuk.org/conceptviability)
- Intellect Supplier Code of Best Practice: [www.intellectuk.org/senioritforum/code](http://www.intellectuk.org/senioritforum/code)
- ISO: [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)
- National Computing Centre: [www.ncc.co.uk](http://www.ncc.co.uk)
- ProfIT alliance: [www.profitalliance.org.uk](http://www.profitalliance.org.uk)
- Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA): [www.sfia.org.uk](http://www.sfia.org.uk)



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